

Jackson County DAC day program serving people with disabilities faces 7 percent cut, putting services at risk, further strain in challenging financial times

Nonprofit in Lakefield relying on state and federal funds already struggling to hire and retain workers as private sector puts pressure on staff recruitment and retention

Concerned that the State of Minnesota is placing further stress on a complex disability service system that has left Jackson County DAC in Lakefield and other providers struggling for years, the Minnesota Organization for Habilitation and Rehabilitation (MOHR), its service provider members and the families and individuals with disabilities they serve now face a 7 percent cut in funding.

“All we are looking for is for some sense of long term stability,” said Mike Burke, president of MOHR. “Stability in a system that will allow us to pay our staff competitive wages, which ultimately helps thousands of people with disabilities

across the state who rely on our services for their quality of life.” Bills have been authored in the Minnesota Legislature to correct the problem.

A direct threat to service providers, the cuts involve complex formulas that determine rates paid to disability service providers which are tied to an inflationary factor and funding agreements with the federal government, he said. A House bill led by Rep. Joe Schomacker and Senate bill authored by Sen. Paul Utke would alleviate the problem, which, if left unaddressed, could mean damaging cuts that are permanent.

MOHR is a member of Best Life Alliance, a statewide coalition of people with disabilities, their families and providers of home and community-based services. The group of more than 1,000 rallied at the

Capitol in March to draw attention to this situation.

Burke said the rally was an excellent opportunity to help state leaders meet and hear stories from the people who will be affected by these cuts. “It’s important for senators and representatives to hear from individuals with disabilities, their families and the people who work closely with them,” said Burke. Individuals are also speaking out in their own communities.

More information is available at mohrmn.org. Representing more than 100 providers in the state, MOHR members provide skills training, employment services, community involvement, behavioral supports and life enrichment activities to more than 26,000 individuals with disabilities in Minnesota.

